

PAARA Graphs

JUNE 1989



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**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
OF THE PALO ALTO AMATEUR
RADIO ASSOCIATION**

AND

THE MENLO PARK C.D. AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

PAARA



PALO ALTO AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION



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PAARA POLICIES

Membership in PAARA is \$6.00 per calendar year which includes a subscription to PAARAgraphs. Make payment to the Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association, P.O. Box 911, Menlo Park, CA 94026

Club Net 147.45 MHz Mondays 8:30 PM

Meet at 7:30 PM on the first friday of each month at the Menlo Park Recreation Center.

Send PAARAgraphs correspondence to:

CHUCK JOHNSON, EDITOR
3309 MOUNT LOGAN DRIVE
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

THE BEST WX IN 3 YEARS GREETED US AT THE '89 W6VG PICNIC, PUT ON FOR PAARA BY RON (W6VG) & HELGA PANTON. AS USUAL IT WAS A GREAT OCCASION, BUT THE SUNSHINE PUT A GLOW ON THINGS THAT MADE IT ALL THAT MUCH NICER THIS YEAR. YOUR EDITOR'S BEST 73 TO OUR PICNIC HOSTS & SEE YOU AGAIN IN 1990! FIELD DAY IS HERE! ALL WHO CAN SHOULD JOIN IN TO HELP OUT ON FRI-SAT-SUN/ 23-24-25 JUNE. MORE DETAILS ELSEWHERE. SEE YOU THERE & SEE YOU NEXT MONTH!

- 73 DE YOUR EDITOR (N6???)

SPEAKER OF THE MONTH

SCCARA TOWER VISITATION!

MEETING JUNE 2ND!!!

A CONTINGENT OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS FROM SCCARA (SANTA CLARA COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION) WILL DEMONSTRATE THEIR MOBILE TOWER TRANSPORT TRAILER SYSTEM IN ALL ITS GREEN GLORY. THIS FUNCTIONAL TOOL FOR SCCARA IS A MODEL OF PORTABILITY AND ENABLES THAT CLUB TO PUT UP A FINE BUSINESS BEAM IN NO TIME.

FITTINGLY, THIS WAS A BESTOWAL TO SCCARA FROM FRANK QUEMENT W6NX, SILENT KEY, LONGTIME SCCARA MEMBER AND OFFICER. THE RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN SCCARA DO A SUPER JOB OF REJUVENATING THE TRAILER & TOWER IN EVERY WAY. DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE TO SEE A PIECE OF HISTORY MADE USEFUL FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW! (TNX TO 'KB6LCJ MIKE FOR OK! -ED.)

DINNER AT REGULAR PLACE. de VE3FZK ANDY

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

I HOPE THE REST OF YOU ARE PAUSING TO SMELL THE ROSES. YOURS TRULY IS MOVING A LITTLE FASTER THAN HE WOULD LIKE. I'VE SPENT 4 OUT OF THE LAST 5 WEEKS IN W1 LAND (HIRAM PERCY LAND?). MY SECOND 2 WEEK STINT I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MY IC2AT AND A LOCALLY PROCURED QUARTER WAVE MAG MOUNT. I FOUND THAT THE UNIFORM SPACING OF NUMEROUS LOW HILLS AND THE LACK OF ANY DOMINATING PEAKS MADE REPEATER COMMUNICATION PRETTY IFFY. THE KEY SEEMS TO BE HAVING A TRANSMITTER AT LEAST AS POWERFUL AS THE REPEATER. IN ANY CASE IT WAS FUN TO TALK TO A FEW W1 FOLKS, MANY OF WHICH WORK FOR THE BIG NAMED COMPANIES SUCH AS DIGITAL ELECTRONICS CORPORATION, WHICH IS HEADQUARTERED ABOUT 10 MINUTES SOUTH OF MY JOB SITE.

THE SPRING PICNIC AT RON W6VG & HELGA'S QTH WAS FUN FOR THE 20-ODD ATTEN DEES. THERE WERE ENOUGH DOOR PRIZES THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE GOT SOMETHING. NEED-LESS TO SAY, THANKS TO THE HOSTS, BUT A SPECIAL THANKS TO LILY ANNE N6PGM WHO HONCHOED THE OPERATION IN MY ABSENCE. WHO STARTED THE RUMOR THAT WE ARE HAVING A 940 FOR A DOOR PRIZE NEXT YEAR?

REGARDING FIELD DAY- MY RECENT TRAVELS HAVE MADE A WEAK FIELD DAY PLAN EVEN WEAKER. I NEED HELP & QUICK! BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING I NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR FIELD DAY CAPTAINS, NOVICE STATION SUPPORT, SATELLITE & PACKET COMMUNICA-

(MORE...SEE FACING PAGE)

***** (2)

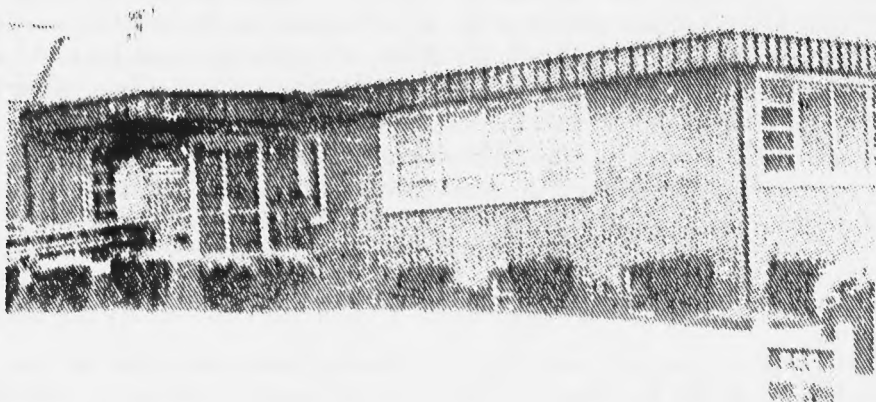
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TIONS, AS WELL AS SOMEONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO ORGANIZE A DINNER AND/OR BREAKFAST.

WE'LL BE TARGETING 3A WITH AN ANTENNA FARM SIMILAR TO LAST YEAR. CALL ME WITH YOUR OFFER OF HELP AS SOON AS YOU READ THIS!

DE W A 6 L N V

10 The end of the line for your 610 is the FCC Licensing Division in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.³



QST

The Lure of Amplitude Modulation: A Relaxing Change from Quack Quack SSB and Packet Racket

Rick Ferranti WA6NCX

Introduction

What's the difference between just communicating with another ham, or actually enjoying the contact? Between plugging in a kilobuck solid-state computerized rice-radio, or really operating an inexpensive 30- or 50-year-old classic transmitter and receiver, with all their tuning and loading controls, crystal phasing, drifting, heat, and wonderful smells? Between restricted, sterile telephone-quality voices (or worse, little characters appearing impersonally on a computer terminal), or full-quieting, full-blown good fidelity audio, so clear that you can actually recognize who you've QSO'd just by hearing their voice at a flea market?

The difference is the modulation mode – not SSB or Packet or other modern “advanced communication” methods, but full-carrier double-sideband amplitude modulation, otherwise known as AM. Its characteristics of fine voice fidelity, noise quieting, and non-critical tuning give it a classic appeal. Simple, inexpensive equipment is all that's needed. And there's romance in hearing the static break through a slowly fading carrier while you fiddle to get the last bit of oomph out of your receiver, until the signal builds up again and the QSO continues. Then it's your turn to transmit, with a clunk of several relays and a long, relaxed transmission, so unlike the hyperspace machine-gun contest-like exchanges of the SSB crowd.

I have held a fascination for AM operation for years, and have owned or operated much of the classic equipment from the 30's to 50's. More and more I seem attracted by radios that glow in the dark and don't slide off the operating table when I plug in a set of headphones! If you'd like a change from the rat-race tinny sound of SSB and the digital rf garbage, consider switching to a mode as old as radio itself. Here are some of my impressions of the equipment and operating practices of the group using Amplitude Modulation.

Receivers

There are many fine AM receivers, some reaching back more than 50 years. The National HRO and Hammarlund Super-Pro are excellent examples, both having been designed in the early 1930's. My current favorite is a National NC-100X from

MORE... SEE FACING PAGE

(TNX TO RICK FERRANTI WA6NCX, PAARA EMERITU

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1936, a sort of streamlined HRO with built-in coil sets and power supply. Waiting in the wings for my restoration in an RCA ACR-175, another great communications receiver from the mid-thirties. Good quality 1940's and 1950's descendants of these receivers, like the HQ-129X or the NC-300, are also favorites of the AM operator. I'd stay away from lesser makes like Hallicrafters, unless you latch onto their top-of-the-line models like the SX-28. Whatever you do, don't try to use a sideband transceiver as an AM receiver - the narrow SSB filter kills all the nice audio fidelity. Quality vintage receivers are often sold for \$50 - \$100 at flea markets; my NC-100X was simply given to me!

Transmitters

Many AM'ers pride themselves on their homebrew transmitters, often with audio fidelity rivalling that of a shortwave broadcast station. (No, I'm not interested in arguments about "wasting bandwidth" by using AM. The same argument says we are wasting bandwidth on SSB - we should all be on CW or narrow-shift RTTY. Anyway, if you think about it, all recreational use of amateur radio is "wasting bandwidth.") Some homebrew rigs are truly amazing - a 4-1000 modulated by a pair of 4-400's, for example, or one Northeast ham who runs a homebrew kilowatt pulse-duration modulated transmitter!

But that's all a little exotic. Most AM'ers run classic commercial rigs, all the way from the beautiful kilowatt Collins KW-1 to the minuscule Gonset Commander. Several Collins KW-1 transmitters are quite alive and on the air; three hams I can think of who use theirs regularly are K1MAN in Maine, W8AHB in Michigan, and KW1I (really, that's his call) in New Hampshire. The KW-1 is pretty much in a class by itself as far as quality and sheer power; the Johnson Desk Kilowatt comes next, and then the relatively cut-rate Globe King 500 series. Lots of Johnson Valiants, Vikings, Heath DX-100's, and even surplus behemoths like the BC-610 also show up. A favorite for fine quality modulation, without breaking the back or the electric meter, is the Johnson Ranger. It runs about 50-60 watts output with built-in VFO, covering 160-10 meters. Lots and lots of these are heard with excellent results. I've contacted AM'ers all over the country with mine (and yes, I got it for free too!)

MORE... SEE NEXT PAGE

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Listening In

As you may gather, there are pockets of AM activity all over the country, though most of what I monitor originates east of the Rockies. Typical frequencies used by the AM crowd are 1885, 1945, 3860-3890, 7290-7295, 14286, and 29000-29100 kHz. The 20 meter frequency comes alive at 9 pm here in the East; in California listen at 6 pm to hear some really big signals from all over the U.S. The 10 meter "AM window" is full of signals when the band is open; it's great for low-power work, even with converted AM CB sets. (I recently had a long QSO with a Texan running a converted CB at 2 watts output - his signals were strong enough to close the tuning eye on my NC-100X and quiet the background noise, and I was 20 over 9 down there with the Johnson Ranger from my QTH near Boston).

More Information

If you're interested in learning more about the AM scene in the country, a very nice monthly 16-page newsletter is the *AM Press/Exchange*, Route 1, Box 281, Woodlawn, Tenn. 37191, published by Don Chester K4KYV. A year's subscription is only \$10, and even if you aren't a subscriber you can still run free AM-related want/sell ads every month. Good place to try and find a KW-1!

A Note to PAARA Members

I got interested in amateur radio over 20 years ago, listening with my 4-tube Knight-Kit "Star Roamer" (which I still have) to a 160 meter AM net called the "Igeroties". It was run by none other than our own Fred K6YT (then W6QWF), and its members comprised a fascinating collection of characters, including W6EAJ, who lived on the side of a mountain somewhere in far Northern California (Horse Mountain Ridge), and whose house and station were powered by a water wheel. When I got licensed in the early 70's I would chat with these folks using an old DX-100 or a surplus TCS transmitter. Ask Fred someday whatever happened to the infamous "Igeroties."

Conclusion

Even if you think all this is quite antiquated and doesn't meet current notions of high-technology, you'll have to admit that the clean, opulent tones of a well-modulated amateur AM phone station sound just wonderful, especially when they emanate from a classic receiver of ham radio's golden age. You can participate in that quality and enjoyment with little expense and a bit of digging, and join the fun of operating with Amplitude Modulation.

DE WA6NCX

■QST■QST■QST■

HAPPY 70TH BIRTHDAY
(JUNE 13TH) TO ---

JOHN GORDANO
1731 ALAMEDA
SAN MATEO COUNTY
REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061

K6JJU

FROM HIS WIFE & FRIENDS!



PAARA FAA TRIP

GUIDED TOUR OF FREMONT FAA FACILITY, JULY 7TH MEETING
NIGHT--- BY FAA'S BEN COSMA WD6EU! SUGGESTED TO BE
AT FREMONT QTH AT 7:45 PM. DIRECTIONS: ACROSS THE
DUMBARTON BRIDGE - SOUTH ON 880 - EAST ON THORNTON -
RIGHT AT 1ST LITE (BLACOW) - RIGHT ON CENTRAL - 2ND
BUILDING ON RIGHT IS FAA ("CAN'T MISS IT")= 1½ HOUR
TOUR LENGTH. DEMO OF ALL PROCESSES OF AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROL WITH EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATIONS. PLAN AHEAD
FOR JULY! -DE VE3FZK

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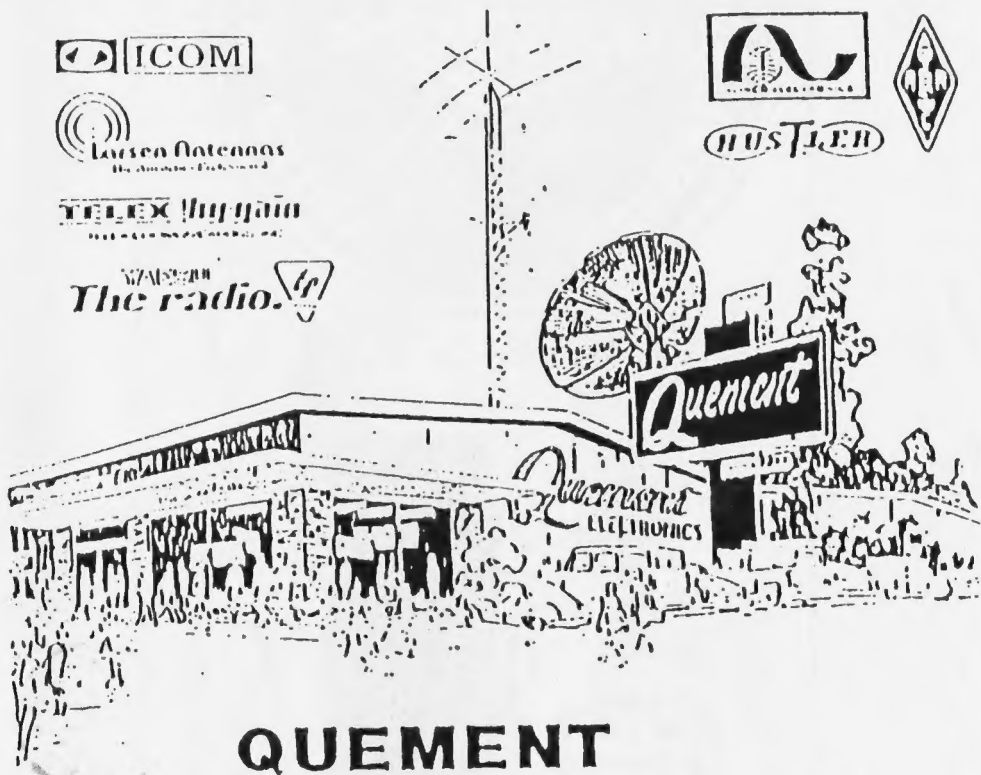
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WATSON
The radio.



MUSTER

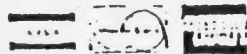


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